



THE ANDERSON SCHOOL (P.S. 334)

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TEAM

SLT Meeting Minutes, February 2013

In Attendance: Jodi Hyde - principal, Diane Heith - K-2 parent rep, Nicole Cardinale - elementary teacher rep, Joy Heinze - PTA co-pres, Laura Mount - 6-8 parent rep, Paul Radvany 5-8 at large parent rep, Leni Cohen -K-2 teacher rep, Robert Moy - UFT rep, Diane Kirksey-Floyd - 3-5 teacher rep, Paula Seefeldt - 3-5 parent rep, Mindy Wigutow - PTA parent rep, Nicole Chandonnet - 6-8 teacher rep, Rina Cohen Schwarz K-4 at large parent rep

6th Grade Math

Some have voiced the concern that when a new topic is taught, and a student gets a problem correct, they move on to a new problem and some students may not understand the new concept yet. It was suggested that those students should be proactive in asking the teacher to explain the concept again. Otherwise the teacher cannot know that they don't understand it. It was also commented that sometimes some students have not had all of their homework returned prior to a test and it can be helpful to study for tests by reviewing homework. It was also discussed that because students correct their own homework in class and then hand it in, it may be difficult for the teacher to have an idea what questions are posing challenges for students. One suggestion was that the class be surveyed how many got a certain problem wrong so that if a significant number of students had trouble with a certain concept that it would be gone over again.

Observing Teachers

A parent asked how often teachers are observed. The teachers union's contract specifies how many formal observations the principal is allowed to make of each teacher and Anderson complies with the contract. In addition, Ms. Hyde conducts numerous informal observations in addition to the required ones in order to have a better sense of what is being taught in the classroom.

Homework Coordination

Several weeks ago, due to a combination of tests and homework assignments, some parents felt that the 6th graders were overwhelmed. It was suggested by a parent that maybe the teachers could try to coordinate homework assignments to avoid this situation. It was explained that Anderson has for years had a system whereby teachers coordinate when they give students tests in order to avoid having too many tests on the same day or in close proximity to each other. Such coordination would be impossible to accomplish with homework. Nevertheless, teachers are very receptive when students inform them that they have a great deal of homework from other classes and often change the due date of an assignment if necessary. Thus, students should inform their teachers if they believe they have too much homework on a given night (given all of their other assignments, homework, tests and projects) so that their teacher can consider whether or not to change the due date of an assignment. It was also suggested that students try to work on long-term assignments as soon as they have time so that their work on those assignments does not occur all in the last one or two days which may be challenging to accomplish given homework and other assignments. It was also suggested that maybe teachers can also put long-term assignments on the testing calendar.

ELA & Math State-wide tests

Over the break ELA and Math acuity work and test books will be available on-line for students who are interested in taking them but they will not be mandatory.

Engrade

It was suggested that teachers of non-core classes, *e.g.* PE, put their grades on Engrade but it was explained that it would be impossible given the number of students. For example, one gym teacher is responsible for all 500+ students in the school. If a student forgets their sneakers twice, an em is sent to the parents as well as a note in their folder. It was also noted that sometimes test results do not appear on Engrade. It was explained that given all of the teachers' responsibilities, there may be times where they haven't had time to post certain grades but that the school and teachers try their best to ensure that Engrade is up to date, and, for the most part, it appears to be.

Improving Organizational Skills

During the past several years, the school has made a concerted effort to teach students organizational skills beginning in the early grades. The goal is that by the time they reach middle school, given the greater demands of middle school, that students have sufficient organization skills to meet the challenge. It is very helpful if parents can also work with their children on these skills and it can be challenging for some students to be organized.

4th Grade Spanish

Some parents have expressed a concern with the use of educational games as part of 4th grade Spanish. It was explained that last year the school had purchased Rosetta Stone program but, given the school's computer system and aging internet infrastructure, it was difficult to use. The new computers do not support Rosetta Stone. This year, because of the bubble year, Spanish is part of the enrichment period but it is not being taught by a certified Spanish teacher. It was requested that the school consider creative ways to teach Spanish for the rest of the year such as videotaping model lessons that could be shown to the children. It is possible that one of the assistant teachers who is good in Spanish can also help out.

4th Grade Lunch

A few 4th grade students have noted that because they are last in-line for lunch, that sometimes there are no sandwiches left or they have to wait for pizza and consequently do not have enough time to eat. It was suggested that there should never be insufficient amounts of food available, especially given the fact that the 5-8th grade students eat lunch afterwards, but if a student believes their isn't enough food they should ask Mr. Schliesman or Ms. Jordan, one of whom are always in the cafeteria. Moreover, if a student needs extra time to eat they can always stay a little longer to finish their lunch.

5th Grade Bubble

The question was raised what will happen next year given the bubble classes. It was explained that the current teachers/teaching load needs to be adjusted because of the bubble. Under the UFT contract, teachers are required to teach 5 classes a day, have one lunch period and one prep period. However, some teachers also have advisory periods and teach electives. The administration has already begun thinking of solutions and will be meeting to try to figure out what can be done. It was noted that it is easier to get 5th and 6th grade teachers because they don't need a middle school license (they are "common branch" teachers). They are considering every possibility.

June Enrichment Report

The goal is to have 2-3 activities per grade. In addition, the goal is that the same enrichments occur every year so that students have something to look forward to when they get into a new grade. The school has purchased the movie "Bullying" but before it will be seen by students the administration and teachers will determine which portions would be appropriate for which grade. It was suggested that there should be additional programs where students are told what may not be appropriate to say on-line.